

REMARKS

Reexamination and reconsideration of claims 1-6 and 18, and consideration of new claims 21-34 are respectfully requested. Additionally, claims 25-34 are dependent on claims 17, 19, and 20, which have been allowed. Applicants respectfully request entry of this reply into the record.

Claims 1, 5, 6, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. sec. 102(e) applying U.S. Pat. No. 5,926,596 ('596). The '596 patent discloses an overmolded alignment ferrule 10 that requires an alignment block 12 having an overmolded body portion 14. For a reference to be applicable under sec. 102(e), the reference must, *inter alia*, disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention.

The amendment of claims 1 and 18 is not an admission that the art of record teaches, discloses, or otherwise suggests the features of the claims. Claim 1 recites a ferrule including at least one optical fiber bore associated with a front surface and a rear surface of the ferrule, first and second body portions extending at least partially between the surfaces and having respective widths, a juncture of the body portions having an interface in the form of a parting line on an exterior surface of the ferrule, the parting line extending longitudinally over a majority of the ferrule between the front surface and the rear surface, and the parting line defining an offset of at least about 50 microns between the first and second body portions.

It is respectfully submitted that at least each and every feature of claim 1 is not disclosed by the '596 patent. Applicants assert that alignment ferrule 10 has a sole parting line (where the two portions 12,14 join as shown in the Figs.) formed between alignment block 12 and overmolded body portion 14. The '596 patent requires that the parting line is disposed transversely to the fiber channels 34,54. See Figs. 4 and 5 of the '596 patent and Col. 5, ll. 14-20. Furthermore, since the

remainder of the alignment block 12 is overmolded this transversely disposed parting line is the sole parting line of alignment ferrule 10.

However, the Office Action asserts that the '596 patent discloses that overmolded body portion 14 forms a parting line at the interface with alignment block 12. See the Office Action dated April 9, 2003. Applicants assert that the parting line as interpreted in the Office Action is internal to ferrule 10 and only exists over a short length of ferrule 10. See the Attachment to the Office Action dated April 9, 2003.

On the other hand, the claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a juncture of the body portions having an interface in the form of a parting line on an exterior surface of the ferrule, the parting line extending longitudinally over a majority of the ferrule between the front surface and the rear surface, and the parting line defining an offset of at least about 50 microns between the first and second body portions. Thus, the '596 patent does not disclose, teach, or otherwise suggest each and every feature of claim 1. For at least this reason, withdrawal of the sec. 102(e) rejection of claims 1, 5, and 6 is warranted and is respectfully requested.

Additionally, for similar reasons it is respectfully submitted that at least each and every element of claim 18 is not disclosed by the '596 patent. Claim 18 recites, *inter alia*, a ferrule including at least one optical fiber bore extending from a front surface to a rear surface of the ferrule, a shaft portion defining exterior surfaces of the ferrule at least partially extend longitudinally between the front and rear surfaces, and a width transition extending longitudinally along a majority of the exterior surfaces of ferrule shaft portion, the width transition comprising a width offset. Thus, the '596 patent does not disclose, teach, or otherwise suggest each and every feature of claim 18. For at least the reasons stated, withdrawal of the

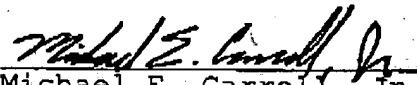
sec. 102(e) rejection of claim 18 is warranted and is respectfully requested.

Two hundred and fifty-two dollars (\$252.00) are believed due in connection with this Reply for the addition of fourteen new dependent claims in excess of twenty claims. If any other fees are due in connection with this Reply, please charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 19-2167.

Allowance of all pending claims is believed to be warranted and is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is welcomed to telephone the undersigned to discuss the merits of this patent application.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Michael E. Carroll, Jr.  
Attorney  
Reg. No. 46,602  
P.O. Box 489  
Hickory, N. C. 28603  
Telephone: 828/901-6725

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (twice amended) A ferrule comprising:

at least one optical fiber bore associated with a front surface and a rear surface of said ferrule;  
first and second body portions extending at least partially between said surfaces and having respective widths, a juncture of said body portions comprising an interface in the form of a parting line on an exterior surface of the ferrule, said parting line [and said optical fiber bore] extending longitudinally over a majority of the ferrule between [at least partially between] said front surface and said rear surface, and said parting line defining an offset of at least about 50 microns between said first and second body portions.

18. (twice amended) A ferrule comprising:

at least one optical fiber bore extending from a front surface to a rear surface of said ferrule;  
a shaft portion defining exterior surfaces of said ferrule, said exterior surfaces at least partially extending longitudinally between said front and rear surfaces; and  
a width transition, said width transition extending longitudinally along a majority [portion] of said exterior surfaces of said ferrule shaft portion, said width transition comprising a width offset.